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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
MONDAY, AUGUST 25, 2008

In Today's Papers

U.S. Ships Deliver Aid to Georgia and Stir up Black Sea Politics  
Media largely reports on Turkey's approval of and the subsequent passage of Georgia-bound U.S. military ships through the Bosphorus. Now, the focus is on concern that the U.S. ships could encounter Russian ships. Mainstream Milliyet carries the front-page headline, "The U.S. is Being Watched by Russia in Batumi." Meanwhile, the paper also reports twenty-five protestors gathered at Dolmabahce Square on the Bosphorus with signs reading 'Yankee Go Home' to protest the passage of U.S. warships into the Black Sea. Liberal Radikal also notes concern about a potential standoff between Russian and U.S. interests in Georgia in the article, "Russia is in Poti and the U.S. is in Batumi..." Islamist-oriented Zaman notes, "American Warships are within 80 Km of Russian Ships," in the Black Sea. Ali Aslan of Zaman writes, "Ankara's suspicions are raised by U.S. efforts to circumvent the Montreux Treaty by sending two giant hospital ships," and these efforts contribute to "fear that the U.S. seeks to weaken the Montreux Treaty." Mainstream Sabah reports, "After passing through our straits, the USS McFaul 74 arrived at Batumi port, 120 km from Abkhazia's capital Sohum, which has created 'anxiety and tension between the Russians and the Americans.'" Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak reports, "Russia is Uncomfortable with the U.S. in Batumi." Mainstream Hurriyet columnist Fatih Cekirge writes, "Turkey is alarmed by the war in Georgia and is afraid of a possible plan to deploy NATO forces in the Black Sea." In addition Cekirge notes, "even if NATO members Romania and Bulgaria push for a revision of the Montreux Agreement, Turkey will resist such pressures."

Russia's "Withdrawal Game." (Vatan) Russia's continued presence in Georgia is covered by focusing on the stories of Russian troops in Poti and the landmine explosion that struck a train carrying petrol from Azerbaijan. Mainstream Milliyet reports, "In Poti, Georgian protestors demonstrated against Russian 'peace keepers.'" The paper also reports approximately 100 people gathered outside the Russian consulate in Istanbul to protest Russia's attempts "to take over energy routes and parts of Georgia." Mainstream Sabah reports, "A suspicious explosion destroyed a train carrying fuel from Azerbaijan after it passed through Gori." Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak

reports, "Russian troops are reportedly in Poti and are stopping traffic and patrolling the streets." Mainstream Vatan carries the headline, "Russia's Withdrawal Game," and notes, "Despite the ceasefire agreement, Russia enrages the West by not withdrawing from Georgia," and, "Georgian officials hold Russian troops responsible for the land mine that destroyed a train carrying petrol from Azerbaijan."

In a related story, yesterday's edition of mainstream Aksam reports, "Moscow and Tbilisi have withdrawn their support for the Caucasus initiative," which was proposed by PM Erdogan. Aksam reports the Georgian Ambassador to Turkey Grigol Mgaloblishvili said, "We cannot sit at the table when the Russians continue to occupy our country." In return, Aksam reports, Moscow "will not join the platform as long as President Saakashvili remains in office."

#### Editorial Opinion on Turkey/Caucasus/Armenia:

Fatih Cekirge wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "There is a growing concern that the U.S. will push for the revision of the Montreaux Treaty. Experts note that the current regime for the Straits does not address U.S. interests in the Black Sea. Major energy routes pass through the Black Sea, and the US will eventually want its warships, including aircraft carriers, to pass through the Bosphorus and into the Black Sea. The status of the Montreaux Treaty will likely come up at the next NATO meeting. However, circles in Ankara are diligently strategizing so as to prevent the Montreaux Treaty from being diluted."

Soner Cagaptay wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "The Russian

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occupation of Georgia will cause long-lasting and negative impacts against Turkey's interest in the region, namely from the East-West energy corridor to Karabakh. Russia will retain its powerful role as long as oil and gas prices remain high. For instance, Turkey's Karabakh policy is based on Azerbaijan's claim to this territory; however, Russia's actions in Georgia prove Russia is the strongest obstacle to this goal. Based on the current developments and the aftermath of war, Turkey must revise and reshape its policy regarding the Black Sea, Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus."

Erol Manisali wrote in leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet: "Turkey and Russia share the same interests in not having the U.S. fleet in the Black Sea. 65% of Turkey's energy resources are tied to Russia. Thus, if Turkey allows U.S. fleets into the Black Sea, bilateral between Turkey and Russia will be strained. Turkey and Russia have similar interests regarding natural gas, Armenia, the status of the Bosphorus straits, The U.S.'s Greater Middle East/Kurdistan projects and the U.S. and EU vision of spreading Capitalism and Christianity throughout the world. However, it would not be a mistake to assume that Russia will also align its interests with those of Iran."

Sukru Kucuksahin spoke with CHP Leader Deniz Baykal and wrote in mainstream Hurriyet: "Opposition party CHP Leader Baykal is not happy with recent foreign policy developments. Baykal bitterly criticized the AKP government's foreign policy approach. Baykal noted, 'During Ahmadinejad's visit, the Iranian leader ignored the sensitivities of his host, Turkey, by making funny remarks about the United States. Moreover, President Gul sat right next to him as he made these remarks. All we as Turks got out of this visit was an insult, nothing else.' With regard to Armenia-Turkey relations, Baykal believes that the government decided to make concessions to Yerevan; therefore PM Erdogan went to Azerbaijan to persuade Baku to do the same. As desired by the US and the Western world, Turkey will warm up to Armenia by ignoring genocide claims and the Armenian occupation of Karabakh. That said, Baykal also claims that Gul will go to Yerevan for the Turkey-Armenia soccer match; this will mark the beginning of Turkey's concession process."

#### PM Erdogan's Spat with Environmentalists

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal: On the third day of his visit to the Black Sea town of Rize, PM Erdogan continued to criticize environmentalists who openly oppose the government's efforts to develop Rize. Erdogan accused the environmentalists in Rize of

"targeting the AKP government" with their protests. In addition, Erdogan noted, "My government and I are the real environmentalists and we are working very hard to improve the environment." Mainstream Hurriyet and liberal Radikal report that 33 environmentalists, including 30 foreign activists, were detained in Sinop while protesting outside the Sinop governor's office. The governor closed their "Ecological Utopia Camp," which mainstream Hurriyet notes "is the first camp of its kind to be shut down out of all Ecological Utopia Camps worldwide since they were first established 19 years ago."

#### "Biden Trouble" (Milliyet)

Mainstream Milliyet reports that "experts tied to Turkey in Washington are worried about Joe Biden as VP." Islamist-oriented Zaman notes Turkey is already experiencing a difficult time in its relations with Armenia, but if Obama and Biden come to power, "the crisis could deepen," as Biden is "tied to the Armenian lobby." Mainstream Sabah carries the headline, "Obama's Zionist Vice President," and notes a prior quotation from Biden to an Israeli television station in 2007 when he said, "I am a Zionist. The U.S.'s greatest power in the Middle East is Israel." Far right Ortadoğu reports in "A Sixty-five-year-old Shrewd Politician," that Biden "is considered to be against Turkey." The Sunday edition of Radikal reports, "For many years Biden has supported Armenian genocide claims, and in Turkish disputes with Greece and Southern Cyprus he has always sided with the Greek and the Greek Cypriots,"

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despite Biden being described as "well-acquainted with Turkey."

#### Editorial Opinion on the U.S. Election Campaign:

Omer Taspinar observed in mainstream Sabah: "Unlike Senator John McCain, Senator Joseph Biden is not a neo-con. Biden is at least as strong and experienced as McCain regarding Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, and Russia. Again unlike McCain, Biden believes that it is very important to act in concert and compliance with the international community. As a result, Biden appears to be the right man for Senator Obama's rather challenging election campaign."

Semih Idiz commented in mainstream Milliyet: "Ankara was not pleased with Barack Obama's VP choice. Joe Biden is well known in Turkey because he does not support Turkey's interests regarding regional issues, including Armenian genocide claims. However, some circles in Turkey believe that Biden could be trained by the facts. Since Obama's election campaign is based on the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, Biden cannot ignore Turkey's role in a withdrawal. However, if Biden refuses to change his stance against Turkey, Turkey will take the opportunity to show Washington that Turkey does not need economic and social support from the U.S. Actually, many people in Turkey have been waiting for such an opportunity for some time."

#### Olli Rehn Calls for Compromise in Turkey

EU Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn, in an article for mainstream Milliyet, urged Turkey to review its EU reform process. Rehn said that "repeated crises have exhausted Turkey's energy for reforms." In addition, Rehn noted, "The closure case against the ruling AKP revealed Turkey's urgent need for judicial and constitutional reforms."

#### Hackers Hacked

Mainstream Hurriyet carried a front-page story on Saturday detailing a joint U.S.-Turkey law enforcement operation against an international chain of computer hackers. The Turkish National Police stated the suspects were captured after a comprehensive operation conducted in cooperation and coordination with the FBI. The hackers stole an estimated \$200 million by hacking into thousands of bank accounts in the United States and Europe. 40 people were detained in 12 provinces, including Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. The gang is reported to have been in operation since 2005.

#### Alevis/Compulsory Religious Education

Milliyet, Hurriyet, Cumhuriyet and Radikal report Alevi protestors spoke to the press and then staged a sit-in for half an hour in Taksim Square in order to protest mandatory education classes in public schools. The protestors promised to engage in such

demonstrations every Sunday "until the AKP government obeys local and international court rulings regarding religious freedom." The Danistay (Turkey's High Court of Administrative Affairs) and the European Court of Human Rights ruled against the government's imposition of mandatory religious classes in public schools.

TV News:  
CNN Turk

#### Domestic News

33 environmentalists taken into custody in Sinop were released.

PKK terrorists attacked a gendarme check point in Siirt; no casualties were reported.

Lightening ignited a forest fire in Mugla, which burnt 150 hectares of forest.

Two bombs planted beside the highway near Bolu were neutralized by the security forces.

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#### International News

The White House expressed regret for any civilian deaths during U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan.

A plane crashed 10 minutes after taking off from Bishkek airport, killing 70 people.

Russia withdrew tanks, artillery and hundreds of troops from their most advanced positions in Georgia, but left check-points in Poti and South Ossetia.

SILLIMAN